(b) if so, presently in which countries our peacekeeping troops are deployed;

(c) the number of casualities, if any, Indian troops suffered during the last five years when serving as UNO peacekeeping forces in different parts of the world; and

(d) whether our troops are adequately compensated for this hazardous nature of duties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) At present, a total of 5636 troop from the Indian Army and Air Force are deployed in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Besides, 123 Armed Forces personnel are deployed as staff Officers and Military Observers in various U.N. Peacekeeping Missions. Inidia has committed to provide additional troops to the UN Mission anticipated in Sudan. If the Mission is established and India is requested to provide troops, the total strength of Indian troops in UN Peacekeeping Operations would increase to around 8,000.

(c) Indian Armed Forces troops have suffered two casualties in the last five years, while serving in UN Peacekeepings Missions. The first casualty was sustaind in an encounter against rebels in Sierra Leone in 2000 and the other in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in a land mine explosion in 2002.

(d) the troops are adequately compensated for the hazardous nature of duty.

Release of Indo-Pak Prisoners

†1753. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to release each other's prisoners following the Indo-Pak Secretary level talks;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if not, the details of the steps taken by Government to release adolescent prisons below sixteen years who crossed over the border by mistake?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) During the Foreign Secretary level meeting in December 2004, it was *inter-alia* agreed that: immediate notification would be provided to the respective High Commissions through the Foreign Ministries of arrested Pakistani/Indian nationals; Consular access would be provided to all prisoners within three months of apprehension; repatriation would be done immediately after completion of sentence and nationality varification; a mechanism would be introduced for early repatriation, without sentencing of inadvertent crossers and a similar mechanism would be established for early release, without sentencing of those under 16 apprehended by either side.

Achievement of SAARC

1754. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have opted out of the SAARC summit;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether countries of South Asia do not have a common security doctrine and perceive the SAARC as a vehicle to countervail India;

(d) if so, the Government's reaction thereon and the steps taken to do this manoeuvering; and

(e) how for the purpose of setting up this organisation has been achieved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Member States of SAARC do not have a common security doctrine. Some member countries have tended on occasion to perceive SAARC as a vehicle primarily to countervail India.